

*Washington, DC* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) is redoubling his efforts to ensure that BP and other oil companies are held accountable for paying all economic damages that result from oil spills. Last week, Hinchey became an original co-sponsor of The Big Oil Bailout Prevention Act, which would lift the liability cap, currently set at \$75 million, for losses related to a spill including lost business revenues from fishing and tourism, natural resources damages, or lost local tax revenues. The bill would ensure that Big Oil – and not the American taxpayer – is responsible for all the true costs associated with an oil spill.

"If a big multi-national oil company spills millions of gallons of oil off our coast, they should be legally required to clean it up," said Hinchey. "Under current law, however, oil companies only have to pay for the first \$75 million in damages and taxpayers are left to clean up the rest of the mess, which can cost tens of billions of dollars. This is unacceptable. If they're going to charge us \$4 a gallon, they can afford to pay 100 percent of the damages they cause when the black goop they pump out of the ground ends up on our shorelines."

Recently, the bipartisan presidential commission on the spill – the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling – found that the current liability cap "limits liability well below levels that might actually be incurred" and "distorts the incentives of industry participants to adopt cost-effective safety precautions."

"Luckily, after the spill in the Gulf last year, BP agreed to establish a \$20 billion escrow account to compensate victims," said Hinchey. "The bad news is that under the law there was no requirement that they do so. We need to have new rules in place to ensure that such a spill can never happen again. And one way to ensure that oil companies obey those rules is to make them accountable for the damages that occur when they don't follow the rules. It's common sense - if you create a mess, or in this case a disaster, you should be held accountable."

Hinchey co-sponsored similar legislation in the 111th Congress in response to the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Parts of the legislation were included in the CLEAR Act, which passed in the House, but failed to pass in the Senate due to a Republican-led filibuster.